

**Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services
State Rehabilitation Council**

**RI Department of Labor and Training
Center General Complex 73 (Main Conference Room)
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920**

**Minutes Tuesday, February 13, 2007
4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.**

Present from State Rehabilitation Council: Linda Amore, Janice Belasco, Raymond Carroll, Linda L. Deschenes, Joseph Ferreira, Jeanne M. Giroux, Margaret Hoye, Anne LeClerc, Gary J. Levine, Lucille Massemينو, Dr. Mona Dorsinville-Phanor, J. David Sienko

Present from Agency: Stephen Brunero, Ronald Racine

Guests: Charlotte Becher, Supervisor of The Point

1. Call to Order and Introductions - The Secretary called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

1. Additions or deletions to the Agenda – There were none.

2. Approval of Minutes – lacking a quorum, minutes will be reviewed for approved at the next meeting.

2. Old Business – D. Sienko

Annual Report - After review of the draft by the leadership it will be sent to printers.

Letter in response to op-ed piece in Providence Journal

The Chair refreshed the members regarding the letter in Journal. The Chair had sent the Council an email asking for their views regarding what action could be taken in writing a letter of response. The membership had mixed views as to putting something out in rebuttal. At the last executive meeting leadership agreed that a letter should be done promoting the advantages of the Program. The committee suggested the Chair bring forth a motion to the Council to draft a letter to the Editor of the Providence Journal promoting the benefits of ORS and linking the Annual Report. The letter will not discuss the op-ed article or the case.

Lacking a quorum – A draft of this letter will be presented to the Council at the next meeting.

Suggestions for the letter – do one every year and use it as a marketing piece, sending it to other organizations in the rehabilitation network thus reaching a broader constituency.

Follow-up at Alton Jones - Alton Jones' response was prompt and polite. In the future N. Baker and the Chair will go out and look at places for meeting locations. And our membership can let us know if there are things that are specifically needed at meetings. R. Carroll will have more in his report on this.

3. New Business

RSA - will be sending direct correspondences to the Chairs of the SRCs and the Chair would like the membership to also get these emails. If anyone does not want them please let N. Baker know.

ORS Director's Report – R. Carroll

Accessibility at Alton Jones – There was a meeting between ORS and the representative of Alton Jones, who welcomed the letter from the SRC. They are using this letter as leverage for the necessary changes, however, the budget problem at the University as well as Alton Jones' principle self-supporting situation are delaying actions.

They are improving the signage for handicapped parking as well as asphaltting and grading the handicapped parking spots. The planned action is to have someone from the Governor's Commission on Disabilities go out and work with them to help integrate the rustic setting with compatibility needs.

We will follow-up with the facility to see how the changes are coming along.

Budget – This year is another difficult one financially. The Governor's letter to the Cabinet indicated freezes on out-of-state travel, and limitation on in-state travel as well. There will be personnel eliminations and a hiring freeze. No new hiring of full-time State workers, no new vendor contracts, furloughed days, no over-time, and various other incentives to decrease the deficit. The situation is significant with a gap of three hundred and fifty (350) million dollars. The Governor has followed up to Agency Directors with details for a balanced budget for fiscal year 2008.

Personnel - ORS has fifteen (15) vacancies. We had someone from the Employee Assistance Program come in to help our staff who are overwhelmed by the work due to the vacancies. Their report highlighted the difficulties of being shorthanded, customer and union grievances as well as slow payments to our vendors.

Recruiting was being done for three (3) positions prior to the Governor's memo of January 12, 2006 regarding freezes. Therefore these three (3) positions have gone up to be filled. The Council may wish to weigh in as we try to get some of these positions backfilled. Budget rollback exercises are currently being done in departments.

This is an overwhelming issue but we still have goals and are concerned with productivity during this difficult time. We met last week to determine where we are in relation to last year. Right now ORS is doing well compared to last year's status.

RSA – Is modifying a web-based training for new SRC members. They are conducting a needs assessment with all State Agencies. And they are in the process of conducting onsite reviews in thirteen (13) states, and RI is in the first round. ORS has an in-house team gearing up for this onsite monitoring visit in the early spring. They will be here for a full week looking at a comprehensive protocol of the systems in place in the State.

State Plan – Will more than likely be a new Plan this year and not just a revised one. We have an in-house team being put together to work on the Plan with the SRC.

Guest Speaker - Charlotte Becher, Supervisor of The Point.

The Point is a resource referral/call center for seniors and adults with disabilities and is contracted through the Department of Elderly Affairs. It was established in 2005. Last year we handled thirty seven (37) thousand incoming calls with each call generating three or four (3-4) outgoing calls.

We strive for person-to-person responses to needs. Recently we have

extended our hours, added two (2) bilingual benefit specialists and access to a language line for interpreters.

The Point is seeking knowledge in the area of services for adults with disabilities. We are trying to harness services into an unfragmented network so that people can call The Point and we can help them access whatever service they need. We want to be a bank of knowledge for consumers and providers. We are establishing an advisory committee and wish to broaden representation from consumers and providers working with people with disabilities. We invite anyone who would help us along in our mission.

Comments:

In the State there are built in referral services, all funded by different parts of the budget. It seems they are not an efficient referrals system. There are enough resources out there but they are not connected properly. I'd like to see an even greater effort being added by everyone in that network working to better it.

Looking at public policy, certain initiatives get funded but they do not necessarily work together. One of the reasons the Department of Education and the VR Program work well is the blending of funding. It clearly states that we have an interagency agreement with each other.

There have been many initiatives like The Point over the years that

have been successful. We even had one in the 1980's and we had connectivity with the providers. The public wants a one-stop center, however when money gets short, it's the first thing to go. Information referral is complex and not a simple answer. To have interrelationship between Councils is good for educational.

J. Belasco thanked C. Becher for coming at her invitation to better the referral network.

The Chair also thanked C. Becher for informing the Council of The Point and its work. He also asked her to contact N. Baker with more details and then she would distribute them to the membership.

Subcommittee Reports

Nomination and Leadership Development - L. Massemينو

There are two (2) new members who have picked a subcommittee. L. Amore will be on the Transportation committee. H. Weis will be on the Employment committee. D. Di Orio has met with two (2) other candidates and once they send in their resumes, the committee will plan for interviews.

Transportation - A. LeClerc

We are proceeding with the survey to determine what agencies are

using what types of transportation services. Employment services will be a primary focus, but not the sole focus, of the survey. We are currently lacking a person to pull this all together. We are looking for an intern to work on this survey.

Suggestions - Send a draft to the Chair and he can help. ORS can mail this out. Or Survey monkey could be used. V. Ferrara and P. Autote have lists of providers that can be used.

State Plan Policy & Quality Assurance – J. Ferreira

The committee will meet at the end of this month.

Suggestion - When policies come to the committee for review they need to be submitted in a red line fashion.

The Chair asked the Policy Chair to schedule a meeting for the Policy committee to meet regarding the State Plan format.

4. Public Comment – None.

5. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Baker, Staff

State Rehabilitation Council